Course Description:
All discussion of international politics rests on conceptual foundations and assumptions. There is a Western IR canon, and a racial reckoning in relation to this canon. China’s rise is also raising the question of whether there is a different Chinese approach to IR, or if China will assume already-theorized positions of a revisionist power. We will explore IR theory’s conceptual foundations and assumptions, while also leaving room for student interest to shape the last 3 weeks of the class.

There is no right way to organize an IR theory core seminar, and the quarter system creates additional challenges. When I went to graduate school, a typical IR core seminar would include weeks on major areas of study in IR, such as war, international cooperation, international political economy, normative theories, the role of ideas in international relations, the democratic peace etc. Another approach might focus on conceptual ideas such as sovereignty, anarchy and power. I have included sample syllabi on our Canvas website, to provide a sense of the variety that exists.

Touchstone theme: A focus on change in the international order
This course will mix a focus on the classical paradigms in IR with a touchstone theme where different approaches are brought to life. A touchstone theme is also a way to create coherence and depth in the context of a survey course. The post-WWII global order is clearly changing. On the one hand, we have been here before. Global orders have changed fundamentally in the past, which is to say that great powers have risen and fallen, and there has been a major shift from city-states to nation-states, empires to multilateralism etc. We will study how these changes have been understood by international relations theories. Yet most of this scholarship focuses on the Westphalian system, a system created by and for European countries. The current moment is facing the rise of China, a country that in some ways wants to maintain the Westphalian system but in other ways seeks to supplant it. Critical scholars also want to change structural features of the international system. The contemporary part of this course focuses on how scholars are conceptualizing and defining ‘change in the international order’, why decolonization failed to change the international order despite the organized demands of developing countries, and how scholars are debating if, whether and how the rise of China will change the current international order.

Course Assignments
Two short exam-style papers (2x 35%) or an agreed upon alternative (e.g. review essay or research paper)
I will give you a comprehensive exam type of question and ask you to answer it by drawing on the readings we have covered in class. You may also bring in readings from other courses, or from your backpack of prior knowledge. Three times over the quarter I will distribute an exam question; the last exam question will be given the last week of class. The paper will be due one week later. You only need to answer 2 of the 3 questions.

Class Participation (20%): The participation grade has three components:
1. Preparation and participation: I expect you to come to each class prepared to discuss the readings for the week. Assigned readings are listed first, and required for each session. Reading notes are not a substitute for doing the reading yourself.
2. Reading notes: Graduate school is a collaborative process. We will divide the readings by the number of students so as to generate notes on everything we read. When the reading is article length, notes should be 1 page long, and in no case more than 2 pages, and include your name, the full citation, and
the page numbers where key arguments are made. Reading notes are due at noon on the day before our class meets.

Co-Teaching (10 %)
1. **Co-chairing a discussion**: This will take some preparation in advance, so you will need to read ahead the week you are a discussant. Discussants are welcome to substitute or bring in additional discussant readings related to the theme.
2. **Summarizing one set of additional readings**: The discussant provides notes on the readings assigned to the discussant, and they will also summarize the reading and interject the ideas in the class.
3. **Peer review of two exam-style papers**: I will assign pairs to be peer reviewers of each paper. I will provide a rubric, and I would like you to be a peer reviewer providing feedback on the paper. The feedback is due a week after the paper is submitted.

Reading Materials
Assigned readings are posted on canvas, or in the library reserve system. There are two books we will draw on. Michael Zürn’s book *A Theory of Global Governance* exists as an unlimited us Ebook. Because we are interested in how IR is taught an explained, I ask you to consult a very popular undergraduate IR Textbook. Jeffry Frieden, David Lake and Kenneth Schultz’s textbook *World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions*. I have purchased a copy for students to share.

**Schedule and Reading Assignments**

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**Week 1: Introduction to IR as a Discipline**

A focus on theoretical foundations of IR and global order reinforces debates that have been Western, white and male. Except for the feminist readings, all of this week’s readings were written by men. This terrible balance is, unfortunately, representative of the state-centric, power-focused field of international relations, and the focus on IR theory. I don’t like what I’m about to say, but it is unfortunately true. The main way to improve the gender balance is to cover feminized topics, including subjects related to international cooperation, human rights and gender in IR. The main way to improve the racial balance is to focus on race and subaltern perspectives. The assignment for the first class is to read any 2 readings from each group (plus the foreign policy article in the 3rd group).

**Mainstream Maps of the IR Discipline (pick 2)- tends to be American, European, male and white**


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1 Using Jane Sumner’s gender balance probabilistic assessment tool the assigned and recommended readings for the first 6 weeks, this syllabus is 79% male, 13% female and 7% unknown (=probably male), and 56% White with 33.5% unknown (4.4% Asian, 5.48% Black, .55% Hispanic).

Brian Schmidt “On the History and Historiography of International Relations” from the *Handbook of International Relations*: 3-22 Sage Publications (2001)


**Critiques of the IR as a Male & Western Discipline: (Pick 2)**


**Race-based critiques of IR: (Read the first and then pick two)**


**Week 2: Realist and Neorealist Theory**

Realism is an evergreen theory and a self-fulfilling prophesy. China and Russia actively embrace realism as justification for their power accumulation and rising aggression. While progressives will argue about the many ways that realism is wrong and antiquated, security studies and political leaders will forever keep realism alive as a theory of international relations.


4. Stephen Krasner. (1992). Realism, Imperialism, and Democracy: A Response to Gilbert. Political Theory, 20(1), 38–52. *This article channels a Morgenthauian realism, defending it while also displaying how interest defined as power works. It is dated—China is no where mentioned—but the point is that interest defined as power will create concrete foreign policy priorities. In the past, I have also assigned Mearsheimer as an example that channels realism.*

5. Mohammed Ayoob (2002) “Inequality and Theorizing in International Relations: The Case for Subaltern Realism” *International Studies Review* 4(3): 27-48. *This article criticizes neo-realism and neo-liberalism for failing in their own goals, and it creates a "subaltern" realism that better explains war and peace, and international collaboration. Subaltern realism is based on classical realism, which was more sensitive to context and history. Ayoob's subaltern realism better explains war and peace. An additional goal is to challenge the hegemony and myopia of IR theorizing in the US.*


**How is this paradigm explained in an intro to IR course:** Frieden, Lake & Shulz *World Politics* chapter on Why are there Wars?

**Discussant Summarize: How Order is Maintained in a realist world**


Robert Keohane “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond” from *Neo-Realism and its Critics* (1986) 158-199 *(A critique of realism, yet fundamental elements are retained. These retentions are seen as a big flaw in Keohane’s theory of politics)*

**Recommended classics of realist thinking:**

Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War.* (1959)

Kenneth Waltz *Theory of International Politics* (1979)


**Recommended critiques**

Andrew Moravcsik and Jeffrey Legro "Is Anybody Still a Realist?" *International Security* (Fall 1999).

"Correspondence: Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm? (Or Was Anybody Ever a Realist?)," *International Security* (Summer 2000).

(Critiques by Peter Feaver, Gunther Hellmann, Randall Schweller, Jeffrey Taliaferro and William Wohlforth and reply by Moravcsik & Legro)


Barry Buzan, People, States, and Fear (1994)

**Week 3: Constructivism: Anarchy v. Other Understandings of Structures**

Each of these readings identifies fundamental features of the international structure that, according to the authors, are shaping of international relations. We want to understand the different formulations of the fundamental structures shaping IR, and think of how these structures matter. One structure is largely ignored. Marxism offered a structural theory rooted in material conditions associated with class and the economy. To some extent,
constructivism’s focus on ideational superstructures has stepped into the void created by the discrediting of materialist Marxist thought. A cost of replacing Marxism with constructivism is that we no longer discuss how capitalism shapes the international system. Of this week's readings, Bull (1977) is the only one writing when Marxism still operated as a prominent theory of international relations. This may be why Bull comes closest to saying that the desire to protect property is a fundamental element of any human-centric social structure.

1. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, Chs. 1 (concept of order) & 3 (how order is maintained) p. 3-22, 53-76.
6. **How this paradigm is explained in an intro to IR course:** Frieden, Lake & Shulz World Politics chapter on International Law and Norms.

**Discussant Summarize: How Order is Maintained in the international social system**

Only volunteer if you have access to the Bull book. 
Recent podcast: Has Constructivism exceeded its shelf life?

**Recommended:**
Karl Deutsch, Political Community in the North Atlantic Area (1957) *Before Bull, before Wendt, Karl Deutsch was rejecting Realist arguments*
Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)
Martha Finnemore, National Interests in International Society, (1996)
Hoffmann, Stanley “Hedley Bull and his Contributions to International Relations” in Hoffmann *World Disorders*.
Justin Rosenberg *The Empire of Civil Society* Version, 1994

**Week 4: Liberalism** (A former prelim question will be distributed this week)

Liberalism, which dates back hundreds of years, is the Western alternative to realism. Liberal assumptions underpin all theories of international cooperation, and most theories of the global economy (Note that neoliberalism is something different). Something to consider is whether liberalism is fused with capitalism. China wants to create capitalism with Chinese characteristics. Is this even possible?
Michael Doyle, Ways of War and Peace, Part II on Liberalism (p. 205-311) Very readable synthetic overview of the liberal paradigm, revisiting its classical roots. Moravcsik distills and updates these arguments, and in doing so many of the deep nuances are eliminated. This reading also introduces the democratic peace argument.

Andrew Moravcsik “The New Liberalism” Reus-Smit & Snidal eds Oxford Handbook of International Relations (2011)p. 235-251 (This is a shorter version of Moravcsik’s “Taking Preferences Seriously” article. The longer argument is more systematic in that it is an attempt to build a testable and predictive liberal theory).

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, “Power and Interdependence Revisited” International Organization 41 (4) 1987: 725-753. This article also explain how order is maintained in this view.


How this paradigm is explained in an intro to IR course: Frieden, Lake & Shulz World Politics chapter on Interests, Interactions & Institutions & the chapter on International Trade

Discussant Summarize: Without the US, will the Liberal World Order crumble?


See also these short policy pieces

Richard H. Haas Liberal World Order RIP Originally published in Project Syndicate March 21 2018

Thomas Wright “The Liberal World Order must be Replaced” The Atlantic September 12, 2018

Matthew Downhour Opportunities and Pitfalls for a Revived Liberal International Order Liberal Currents Blog September 28, 2022

Recommended:


Critiques


Week 5: Constitutional Elements of the Post WWII International Order and how orders changes

After WWII, multilateralism replaced imperialism as the organizing form for international relations. Multilateralism embodies liberal assumptions, yet it is distinct in its own ways. Many Westerners see Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as a fundamental challenge to the post WWII International Order, which leads directly to the question of how orders establish, and how they change.

4. Patrick Porter The False Promise of Liberal Order: Nostalgia, Delusion and the Rise of Trump (2020) Chapter 4, the Machiavellian Moment: roads ahead This reading is a provocation

5. **How this idea is explained in an intro to IR course:** Frieden, Lake & Shulz *World Politics* Chapter on Challenges to the Global Order

Thinking about Change


Discussant Summarize: Revisiting classics on how world orders change

Waltz, Kenneth *Theory of International Politics* excerpts on political structures and the Management of International Affairs

**Recommended:**
Stanley Hoffman Chapters 3 (Ideal Worlds), 8 (Delusions of World Order) in Hoffmann, A World Disordered

Week 6: Zurn’s Theory of Global Governance (A former prelim question will be distributed)

What is IR theory? This week we are reading a book to think also about the format of a book and Zürn's claims about what theories must do. We will interrogate Zürn’s description and defense of what a theory must do; the idea that his theory of global governance applies to a specific context (the post-1990s global governance system); and his claim about the paradigm changing nature of his theory.

Assignment: We will collectively read the theory (Intro + part I) and the conclusion. I recommend that you read my notes on Chapter 5 in conjunction with this reading. Note-takers will fill in the missing chapters:
Chapter 6: Theory of politicization (including measures and tests)
Chapter 7: Counter-institutionalization (including hypotheses and findings)
Chapter 8: Deepening (findings and arguments)
Chapter 9: Global governance with a Cosmopolitan Intent (if someone wants to explore political theory more)

How this idea is explained in an intro to IR course Frieden, Lake & Shulz chapter on What Shaped our World: Historical Introduction

Discussant: A symposium on this book
Symposium: Authority, Legitimacy, and Contestation in Global Governance: Edited by Orfeo Fioretos and Jonas Tallberg International Theory 13 (1) 2021

These last 3 topics were chosen by seminar participants
Week 7: Sovereignty and the State in IR
I have given you the original Krasner, which is long. The key idea to absorb is Krasner's 'organized hypocrisy' claim. An alternative to reading deeply beyond Krasner's central argument is to read Danile Phillpott's push back against Krasner's argument, alongside his comparison of another definition of sovereignty. I would then read the handbook chapter, as you get an update of how Krasner thinks about sovereignty. Biersteker is a critical scholar, so his is a critical engagement of the idea. I then offer 3 new readings that are chosen because I think they will be of particular interest to members of this class.

Old Classics
(skim) Stephen D. Krasner “The Persistence of State Sovereignty” in Orfeo Fioretos. International History and Politics in Time. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017 (also published in Oxford Handbook on Historical Institutionalism (2016) A recap of the key concepts, an argument that the different notions of sovereignty contribute to partial sovereignty, plus Krasner’s argument of the EU is the only example of sovereignty being transformed
Thomas J. Biersteker “State, Sovereignty and Territory” from the Handbook of International Relations Sage Publications (2001)

New Challenges

Discussant Recommendation: Is it possible to get beyond Westphalian sovereignty?
Possible readings:
Hedley Bull The Anarchical Society, Part III: Alternative Paths to World Order In this part of the book, Hedley Bull reviews history and explores whether it is possible or desirable to move beyond the anarchical society of states.

**Recommended**


**Week 8: Domestic Politics and International Relations – Digging deeper into the levels of analysis problem**

This week is filled with classics, and some newer readings written by female scholars. Singer explains the level of analysis problem. Whereas the second image is usually a question of how domestic politics shapes IR, Gourevitch flips the directionality, asking how might IR defines domestic politics? Putnam explains how diplomats use domestic constraints in their diplomacy. Wangen et al. return to the classic of Graham Allison’s breakdown of models of decision-making in the Cuban Missile Crisis, which brings in organizational theory. Barnhart et al explore how the expansion of women’s suffrage has impacted foreign policy, bringing gender into the analysis. Alter puts side by side 3 models of how international law shapes state policy: state level bargaining, multilateral politics, and a politics where domestic actors use international law for their own purposes.

**Old Classics**


**Newer Work**


Karen J. Alter “International Courts Altering Politics” in *The New Terrain of International Law: Courts, Politics Rights* Putting the idea that international law is externally imposed alongside the idea that domestic actors are actively bringing international law in. Skim 34-41. Focus on 42-67.

**Discussant Recommendation**

Whereas realist IR scholars see no significant role for domestic politics to shape state behavior, Liberals expect domestic politics to mostly matter in democracies. New literature on authoritarian politics focuses on the existence of domestic constraints. I recommended some options, but there may be others too.


Recommended readings:


Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman “Review Article: Domestic Institutions Beyond the Nation State: Charting the New Interdependence Approach” *World Politics* 66(2) 2014: 331-63. [Note this is one of the sample Review Essay Articles in the Folder]

Gourevitch, Peter “Domestic Politics and International Relations” from the Handbook of International Relations Sage Publications (2001)


Week 9: Thinking about orders: Empires, Medieval Systems, Complex Systems, and what might be

Sovereignty, despite its messiness, has created clarity about the international order that has not existed historically, and doesn't exist in global governance. By resolving where authority lies (the state, or the UN Security Council), there is a way to know who is in charge. Meanwhile, all other forms of political organization contain ambiguity which allows contestant over where authority resides. One can therefore ask if sovereignty has actually resolved the question of who is in charge of what? Will the concept of rule provide an antidote?

Doyle, Michael Empires 1986, Chapters 1 (Imperialism & Empires), 14 (Imperial Development: The end of Empire?) *It is hard to find a contemporary mainstream IR scholar writing about empires. Doyle’s book is a classic. Historians have no problem describing particular empires, but Doyle shows that in IR theory, it isn't all that easy to know an empire when one sees one.*

Spruyt, Hendrik “Collective Beliefs and Visions of Order” *The World Imagined* Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp.34-79. *Spruyt’s theoretical argument about how different cultures envision different orders. This is the most interpretivist Spruyt I have seen.*

Costa Lopez, J. (2020). Political Authority in International Relations: Revisiting the Medieval Debate. *International Organization, 74*(2), 222-252. *Returning to medieval times to understand contestations over authority*

Alter, K. J. and K. Raustiala (2018). "The Rise of International Regime Complexity." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 14: 329-349. *Multiple forces that layer on new institutions, generating contested global authorities. This article also summarizes the state of theorizing about regime complexity. Alter and Meunier's effort to theorize the politics of international regime complexity has over 1000 google citations. Has any consensus been reached?*

Christopher Daase, Nicole Deitelhoff & Antonia Witt *Rule in the Study of World Politics*. This is an introduction to a forthcoming book that tries to replace the anarchy problematique with a concept of rule as a systemic conception of international politics.

Frieden, Lake & Shulz chapter on What Shaped our World: Historical Introduction

Discussant: Empires v. complex systems

IR scholars reductively and implausibly simplify, because complexity messes up IR theorizing. These readings try to discuss how to bring complexity back into IR theorizing.

Critical Review- Special Issue on Robert Jervis *Systems effects* 15 years on. Intro by Frieden & Response by Jervis.


Alter, K. J. (2022). "The promise and perils of theorizing international regime complexity in an evolving world." The Review of International Organizations 17(2): 375-396. In this reading, Alter comments on a special issue and how challenging it has been to theorize the complexity of global governance.
Recommended Readings


Derek O’Brien “Magna Carta, the ‘Sugar Colonies’ and ‘Fantasies of Empire’ in Robert Hazell and James Melton’s *Magna Carta and its Modern Legacies* (2015)


Hopson, John “Re-Embedding the Global Colour Line within Post 1945 International Theory” in Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda and Ribbie Shillam eds *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line* p. 81-97

On regionalism


Wild Card Weeks: The class will pick the focus of the remaining 3 weeks, after which I will update readings. Possible topics (or offer your own)

A. Hierarchy & Authority International Relations

Hierarchy is a concept that David Lake has reinstituted as an alternative to realism & liberalism, and it is arguably a Chinese approach to IR. We can discuss Lake’s claims about hierarchy, and about the concept’s applications.

Hierarchy is a power-infused way of thinking about authority. International institutions & international law lack power, but they have authority. We can think about the relationship of power, hierarchy & authority in IR.


Freeman, Bianca, D G Kim, and David A Lake. “Race in International Relations: Beyond the ‘Norm Against Noticing.’” *Annual Review of Political Science* 25, no. 1 (2022): 175–96

B. A Chinese IR Theory? Relational approaches (or Imperialism redux?)

I would update these readings….


Discussant Summarize: How do debates about a Chinese world order fit with conversations about international authority?


Debate over Authoritarian International Law- AJIL Unbound- I recommend Scott and Mallat, but whichever interests you.

Recommended Readings


C. Gender and International Relations

Feminist perspectives (plus the discussant readings)


Gender as a lens:


The Debate (read 1)


Teaching Feminist IR- No notes: Jacqui True: Feminism and Gender Studies in International Relations Theory

Recommended: A critical perspective on Western Feminist approaches

Discussant summarize: Should we resist the discipline’s tendency to prefer the “gender as a lens” perspective

J. Ann Tickner “Feminist Perspectives on International Relations” from the Handbook of International Relations Sage Publications (2001)

Plus summarize also the conversation about women and support for war.


Recommended readings:

Cynthia Enloe, Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 2nd ed.
Joshua Goldstein, Gender and War (Cambridge University Press 2001) Chs. 1, 4 and 5.
Jacqui True “Feminism and Gender Studies in International Relations Theory”Oxford Research Encyclopedia, International Studies (c) International Studies Association and Oxford University Press USA, 2020

D. International Regime Complexity

This is a debate I helped to launch which seeks to understand how the proliferation of international institutions is shaping of international politics. It gets to the question of how much the current international system—littered with preexisting institutions—is likely to change. Will it change by layering on new institutions (to what end)? Will it change by adapting new institutions?

E. Emotions, Biology, Values, and Cognitive Theories


Recommended:

F. Transnationalism and Networks


Discussant summarize: Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. *Activists Beyond Borders*. Cornell University Press, 1998, chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-120). *This reading is not in the coursepack. Please order the book or obtain from the library.*

Recommended readings: